

As the government agencies concerned with motor carrier safety continue to make the roads safer for everyone, I believe it is important and very necessary that a close look be taken as to why people (drivers) get fatigued. The idea that an individual begins to get tired the moment he or she signs a document, like a driver's log, is unreasonable. Common sense should tell us this but, like Mark Twain once said, 'common sense isn't so common.' We all know, when we think about it, that we begin to get tired the moment we awaken from sleep. That is, fatigue is not a sudden thing... it occurs progressively from the moment we awaken until it brings our head to pillow. This whole thing might be compared to two glasses of water. One is empty; the other full. The full glass represents our mental state (alertness) when we awaken. Through the day, the water from this glass is poured into the empty glass until we have lost all the alertness and we have full fatigue, and fall asleep. There is no magic time when this process begins except we know it begins when we wake up, not when we say we're ready to drive. This means that a driver, even those who might have been "off duty" for many days, could arrive at a driving task very much fatigued if that task begins hours after the driver awakens. In other words, it isn't the work that makes a person tired but the simple fact that he or she has been awake. Now how can this knowledge work toward highway safety? Knowing how human beings operate may encourage technology to enter the picture and develop some means to test a person's fatigue level. If it could be determined that only persons with a particular level of fatigue would be eligible to drive, we would be one more step closer to reducing the highway accident rate. We know that we get tired because we've been awake. Consider anyone, on his or her day off.. regardless of what they might do during this time frame, at the end of the day, they're tired...but why? If they've not driven, why are they so exhausted? You see, it isn't what we do during an awake phrase of life but simply because we're are awake. Humans exist in one of two plains... we are either awake or asleep...and these two realms are inversely proportional to each other...one increases while the other decreases. It is the way things are...and it is silly (and dangerous) to think that a person begins to be tired when he or she steps into a driver's seat, ready to roll down the road with cargo or passengers. Employers, drivers, the general public make the mistake of thinking that we don't begin to get tired until we get behind the wheel. This sort of thinking has been a large factor in highway deaths for many years.